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PENSOFT

Alpine Entomology

Bernhard Merz (29.VII.1963–14.II.2023)

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Born on July 29, 1963 in Basel, Switzerland, Bernhard Merz attended school in the canton of Basel-Landschaft (BL). He studied biology at the ETH Zürich (1982–86), graduating with a Bachelor's thesis entitled "Vegetationszusammensetzung von Trespen-Halbtrockenrasen nach 10-jähriger Brache, Mahd- und Brandbewirtschaftung bei Merishausen (Kt. Schaffhausen)" under the supervision of Prof. Elias Landolt.

After a trip to the USA, New Zealand and Australia from January to April 1987, he was employed from May 1 to September 30, 1987 as a technical collaborator at the entomological collection of the Institute of Entomology of the ETH Zürich. He later continued his work in the collection of the ETH Zürich as a PhD student of Prof. Willy Sauter, where he worked from March 1, 1988 to September 30, 1992.

He received his doctorate at the ETH Zürich on September 11, 1992 with a PhD thesis entitled "Revision der westpalaearktischen Gattungen und Arten der *Paroxyna*-Gruppe und Revision der Fruchtfliegen der Schweiz (Diptera, Tephritidae)".

On October 1, 1992, he became curator of the entomological collection at the ETH Zürich, a position he held until November 30, 1998. At the same time, he also worked as a teaching assistant and lecturer at the Institute of Entomology of ETH Zürich from October 01, 1993 to September 30, 1993, then in Applied Entomology (former Institute of Entomology) at the Institute of Plant Science of ETH Zürich from October 01, 1993 to November 30, 1998, where he became also Senior scientist from March 1, 1996 to November 30, 1998. On December 1,

Figure 1. Bernhard Merz in his office at the Natural History Museum in Geneva on July 30, 2005.

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Figure 2. Bernhard Merz during a Wednesday animation on Diptera on January 14, 2009.

1998, Bernhard Merz was hired as a research scientist at the Department of Entomology of the Natural History Museum of Geneva. He was later promoted to the position of curator on December 1, 1999.

Bernhard Merz was a passionate and dedicated entomologist who focused his interests on Diptera, in particular the Tephritidae, Pallopteridae and Clusiidae of the world (taxonomy, nomenclature, phylogeny and biogeography), the Lauxaniidae of the West Palearctic region (taxonomy), as well as on the faunistics of the Diptera of Switzerland in general and of Geneva in particular. He was involved in various academic societies, including the Swiss Entomological Society (member: 1988–-2015), the Entomological Society of Zurich (member: 1988–1999; committee 1993–1999; president: 1995–1999), Pronatura Zürich (committee: 1994–1998), the Entomological Society of Geneva (member: 1999–2014; committee: 1999–2008, president: 2003–2008), and the Entomological Society of Basel (member: 2002–2015).

In addition to countless excursions in Switzerland in search of Diptera, his interests also led him to go prospecting with his net in Sweden (30.VII–11.VIII.2001), England (2–13.IX.1998), Holland (23.VIII–28.VIII.1995), Austria and Czechia (22.VIII–4.IX.1990), Hungary (9–25.VI.1991), mainland Italy (7–17.V.199; 25–27.V.2001; 30.VIII–3.IX.2004), Sardinia (10–24.VI.2002), Sicily (3–17.VI.1999), France (25.VIII–1.IX.1988; 2–7.VI.1990; 3–7.VI.1993; 30.V–5.VI.1995; 6–15.VI.2007), Andorra (5–18. IX. 1999), mainland Spain (3–24.IV.1989; 26.VII–3.VIII.1995), Canary Islands (28.IV–5.V.1988; 3–17.III.1990; 21.IX–4.X.1998), Malta (3–17.VI.1999; 1–7.V.2001; 21.IV–7.V.2002), Crete (16–23.IV.1991), Cyprus (21.IV–7.V.2002), Turkey (20–27.IX.1990 25.IV–3.V.2000), Israel (9–23.IV.1992; 10–18.III.1995; 7–18.VI.1996; 26.VI–3.VII.2000), Kyrgyzstan (27.IV–28.V.1994), South Korea (12.VI–1.VII.2005), Thailand (15.X–5.XI.2000), Australia (4–31.X.2002), Canada (15–23.VIII.1994) and Kenya (28.II–21.III.1993). The fruits of his work increased the size of the Diptera collection at the Museum of Geneva from barely 10'000 specimens to nearly 100'000 specimens, including more than 30'000 Lauxaniidae and Tephritidae. During his career, he described 96 taxa (five genera and 91 species; Suppl. material 2), and 30 taxa (two genera and 28 species; Suppl. material 1) were dedicated to him. His 236 published scientific papers on the taxonomy and faunistics of Diptera and other insects make him undoubtedly one of the greatest Swiss entomologists of his generation.

For health reasons, he was forced to give up his research, as well as his position as curator at the Museum in Geneva, which he left definitively on January 31, 2014 at the age of 50. Despite his great courage in the face of illness, he passed away on Tuesday, February 14, 2023 at the Cantonal Hospital in Chur, Switzerland. He was a generous man with great qualities and abilities, including a prodigious memory, which he put to use in his work and other passions, especially tea, which he could discuss for hours.

We thank Betty Oudomsouk and Philippe Wagneur (MHNG) as well as Tommy Andriollo (Annemasse), Patrick Graff (Basel) and Valery Korneyev (National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kiev) for providing relevant information, and Jean Wüest (Geneva) for his comments and suggestions.

Giulio Cuccodoro et Bernard Landry,
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Supplementary material 1

Merz's patronymic taxa (2 genera and 28 species)

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Supplementary material 2

Taxa described by Bernhard Merz (5 genera and 91 species)

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Supplementary material 3

List of the scientific publications of Bernhard Merz (236)

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